HARDER, BETTER, FASTER, STRONGER: EPISTEMIC STANDARDS AND MORAL BELIEFS

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ABSTRACT: Much work in moral epistemology is devoted to explaining apparent asymmetries between moral and non-moral epistemology. These asymmetries include testimony, expertise, and disagreement. Surprisingly, these asymmetries have been addressed in isolation from each other, and the explanations offered have been piecemeal, rather than holistic. In this paper, I provide the only unified account on offer of these asymmetries. According to this unified account, moral beliefs typically have a higher epistemic standard than non-moral beliefs. This means, roughly, that it is typically more difficult for agents to receive the relevant positive epistemic credit (e.g. knowledge) for moral beliefs than for non-moral beliefs. After presenting this account, I consider two alternative unified accounts. According to the first alternative, moral matters are more cognitively demanding; according to the second, moral beliefs have more defeaters. I argue that neither of these alternative accounts succeed, and that my higher standards account is the best unified explanation.

KEYWORDS: epistemic standards, moral testimony, moral expertise, moral disagreement

Introduction

A quick survey of recent literature in moral epistemology will tell you that many think that moral beliefs are epistemically special. More particularly, one will find many papers dedicated to discussing noteworthy asymmetries between certain areas in our moral and non-moral epistemology, like testimony, expertise, and disagreement. These differences are often viewed as obstacles or hurdles moral beliefs face on their way to moral knowledge that non-moral beliefs don't face. For example, while non-moral knowledge is thought to be easily achieved via testimony, moral testimony is thought to be epistemically problematic, morally problematic, or both.[1] In the same vein, while non-moral expertise is obvious,

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[1] Roger Crisp, "Moral Testimony Pessimism: A Defense," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 88, 1 (2014): 129-143; Nicole Dular, "Moral Testimony under Oppression," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 48, 2 (2017): 212-236; Allison Hills, "Moral Testimony and Moral Epistemology," *Ethics* 120, 1 (2009): 94-127; Robert Hopkins, "What is Wrong with

moral expertise is highly controversial and doubtful at best, and moral disagreement threatens skepticism in a way that non-moral disagreement fails to.

What explains these puzzles? Perhaps different things explain each: the proper explanation of the puzzle concerning testimony will in turn differ from the proper explanation for the puzzle concerning expertise which will differ from the proper explanation of the puzzle concerning disagreement. In fact, those who have sought to explain these puzzles in moral epistemology have done just that, seeking to explain them individually rather than collectively.[2] I am not interested here in these piecemeal accounts. Rather, I am interested in the possibility of giving a *unified* explanation of all of these puzzles. As I'll argue, we can give such a unified explanation. The unified explanation I articulate here is an elegant, simple explanation that utilizes a familiar epistemic mechanism. Given that, all things considered, a unified account ought to be preferred, and provided that this account can adequately explain the puzzles and explain them better than alternative unified accounts, we have reason to prefer the account I give.

Moral Testimony?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74, 3 (2007): 611-634; Robert J. Howell, "Google Morals, Virtue, and the Asymmetry of Deference," *Nous* 48, 3 (2014): 389-415; Sarah McGrath, "The Puzzle of Pure Moral Deference," *Philosophical Perspectives* 23, 1 (2009): 321-344; Andreas L. Mogensen, "Moral Testimony Pessimism and the Uncertain Value of Authenticity," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92, 1 (2015): 1-24; Philip Nickel, "Moral Testimony and its Authority," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 4, 3 (2001): 253-266.

[2] For accounts which deal only in moral testimony, see Crisp, "Moral Testimony Pessimism," Hills, "Moral Testimony," Hopkins, "What is Wrong," Howell, "Google Morals," McGrath, "Pure Moral Deference," Mogensen, "Moral Testimony Pessimism," and Nickel, "Moral Testimony"; for accounts which deal only in moral expertise, see Sarah McGrath, "Skepticism about Moral Expertise as a Puzzle for Moral Realism," *Journal of Philosophy* 108, 3 (2011): 111-137 and Gilbert Ryle, "On Forgetting the Difference between Right and Wrong," in *Essays in Moral Philosophy*, ed. A. Melden (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), 147-159; for accounts which deal only in moral disagreement, see William Tolhurst, "The Argument from Moral Disagreement," *Ethics* 97, 3 (1987): 610-621. Although no accounts exist which seek to explain all three puzzles together, some accounts consider two of the puzzles in tandem, looking to the bearing one puzzle may have on explaining the other (but not giving an account of what explains them both): for example, Ben Cross, "Moral Philosophy, Moral Expertise, and the Argument from Disagreement," *Bioethics* 30, 3 (2016): 188-194 argues that the puzzle of moral disagreement undermines the possibility of moral expertise; Julia Driver, "Autonomy and the Asymmetry Problem for Moral Expertise," *Philosophical Studies* 128, 3 (2006): 619-644 considers the puzzle of our resistance to accepting the testimony of supposed moral experts, and Sarah McGrath, "Moral Disagreement and Moral Expertise," in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics Vol. 4*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 87-108 looks to moral disagreement within the context of there being no moral experts.

This paper will proceed as follows. First, I will look more closely at these longstanding puzzles of testimony, expertise, and disagreement, and the existing piecemeal explanations on offer. Then, I will provide my unified explanation, the Higher Standards account, which holds that moral beliefs typically have a higher epistemic standard than non-moral beliefs. After providing my unified account and showing how it explains the puzzles, I consider two competing unified accounts and argue that both are unacceptable. Finally, I consider and respond to two objections to my own account.

1. The Oddity of Moral Epistemology

Here, I'll explain briefly why each of the three puzzles noted above has been thought to be especially *puzzling*. In the next section, I'll explain how to deal with these puzzles in a unified way.

One area of moral epistemology that has recently received a great deal of attention is moral testimony, and for good reason: our judgments regarding moral and non-moral testimony exhibit a striking asymmetry. While we think it's perfectly acceptable to form non-moral beliefs solely on the basis of others' reports, we balk at instances of forming moral beliefs solely on another person's say-so. Consider:

> Eleanor has always enjoyed eating meat but has recently realized that it raises some moral issues. Rather than thinking further about these, however, she talks to a friend, who tells her that eating meat is wrong. Eleanor knows that her friend is normally trustworthy and reliable, so she believes her and accepts that eating meat is wrong.[3]

> Danielle hears about an upcoming demonstration protesting Israel's war in Gaza. Although she knows the causes of the war and knows that civilians are dying from IDF bombing, Danielle is unsure whether the war is just. She doesn't try to think through the matter for herself. Instead, she asks a reliable and trustworthy friend, who says the war is immoral. Danielle accepts her friend's claim and joins the protest. Asked by a journalist why she is demonstrating, Danielle says she knows the war is wrong because her friend told her so.[4]

Here, many object to Eleanor's and Danielle's reliance on their friends in forming their moral beliefs: there is something *prima facie* wrong about Eleanor and Danielle forming their moral beliefs solely on the basis of their friends' say-so. Importantly, these judgments don't seem to be confined to the specific moral subject matter (e.g. eating meat) or sporadic; as Sarah McGrath notes, "the attitude

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[3] Hills, "Moral Testimony," 91.
[4] Mogensen, "Moral Testimony Pessimism," 1.

that pure moral deference is more problematic than non-moral deference is widespread, even if not universal, in our culture."[5]

Moral testimony isn't the only area in moral epistemology that presents unique epistemic challenges; consider *expertise*. While it's obviously true that there are experts on all kinds of non-moral subjects, moral experts are thought to be at best few and far between, and at worst entirely non-existent.[6] Moreover, while it's usually clear what's required for non-moral expertise, there's confusion and disagreement over what is even required for moral expertise. To put it most pessimistically: if, contrary to appearances, there even are any moral experts, we will be seriously hard pressed to find them.[7]

And, if moral testimony and expertise weren't enough, moral disagreement poses its own unique challenges. Unlike disagreement in non-moral domains, moral disagreement is thought to be especially intractable, as it persists even when both parties appear to share the same (non-moral) evidence. Because of its intractability and persistence, the mere fact of moral disagreement appears to lead directly to moral skepticism. For example, Tolhurst argues that it makes our moral beliefs never justified,[8] while McGrath and Vavova both argue that disagreement leads to skepticism about a certain subset of our moral beliefs.[9] Note that no such route to non-moral skepticism (about the existence of global warming, say) is generally thought to be available. Worse, moral disagreement seems to be more widespread than non-moral disagreement.

This way in which moral disagreement appears to lead to moral skepticism will be my focus here regarding the epistemic asymmetry of moral and non-moral disagreement. Even so, there two closely related questions regarding moral disagreement that I'm not interested in pursuing here. I'll mention them only to set them aside for the remainder of the paper. First, the question of (a) why moral disagreement is so widespread and intractable, and, second, the question of (b) whether we should be "steadfast" and retain our moral beliefs when faced with such disagreement. I set these related issues aside and focus on the question of how moral disagreement can lead to moral skepticism for present purposes because unlike the issue of skepticism, (a) and (b) do not directly concern notable *epistemic*

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[5] McGrath, "Skepticism about Moral Expertise," 323.

[6] McGrath, "Skepticism about Moral Expertise," 323; McGrath, "Moral Disagreement;" Ryle, "On Forgetting."

[7] Michael Cholbi, "Moral Expertise and the Credentials Problem," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 10, 4 (2007): 323-334.

[8] Tolhurst, "Moral Disagreement."

[9] McGrath, "Moral Disagreement;" Katia Vavova, "Moral Disagreement and Moral Skepticism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 28, 1 (2014): 302-333.

asymmetries in *moral* epistemology. I take (a) to be a metaphysical metaethical question, as the widespread and persistent nature of moral disagreement typically requires metaphysical explanations, such as that either moral relativism or expressivism is true.[10] Although (b) is an epistemic question, I take it to be a question about the correct response to peer disagreement in general, not a question about moral epistemology in particular. In other words, it's unlikely that the correct response to peer disagreement about morality differs the correct response to peer disagreement about non-moral matters. In any case, I won't pursue either of these questions here.

Now, while moral epistemologists have offered explanations of these three asymmetries between moral and non-moral epistemology, what is striking is that all extant approaches have been piecemeal in nature: such accounts aim to explain only why moral testimony is especially problematic, or why moral expertise is especially difficult, or why moral disagreement is especially bad news for moral knowledge. For example, proposals to explain moral testimony appeal to problems it creates for moral agency,[11] or moral understanding (the true "aim" of moral beliefs),[12] or that we can't identify reliable testifiers.[13] Likewise, explanations of the puzzle of moral expertise have pointed to difficulties in identifying experts[14] or to the widespread presence of disagreement as undermining the possibility of moral experts.[15] Lastly, accounts of moral disagreement have claimed that the explanation of why moral disagreement leads to skepticism is that we should all be conciliationists about disagreement in general.[16] But when each of the issues of moral testimony, moral expertise, and moral disagreement are taken together as a whole, the phenomenon to be explained changes its shape and becomes quite striking: it seems that there's not one special problem with moral testimony, one special problem with moral expertise, and one special problem with moral

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[10] For examples of these types of arguments, see: Gilbert Harman, "Moral Relativism," in *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*, ed. Gilbert Harman and Judith Jarvis Thomson (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 1-64; Jesse Prinz, *The Emotional Construction of Morals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); David Wong, *Natural Moralities: A Defense of Pluralistic Relativism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[11] Crisp, "Moral Testimony Pessimism;" Hills, "Moral Testimony;" Hopkins, "What is Wrong;" Howell, "Google Morals;" Mogensen, "Moral Testimony Pessimism;" Nickel, "Moral Testimony."

[12] Hills, "Moral Testimony."

[13] McGrath, "Pure Moral Deference."

[14] Cholbi, "Moral Expertise;" Driver, "Moral Expertise."

[15] Cross, "Moral Philosophy."

[16] Vavova, "Moral Disagreement."

disagreement. Instead, it seems there's some special problem with moral epistemology *as a whole*.

Of course, some think that our judgments concerning the asymmetry of moral testimony, expertise, and disagreement with their non-moral counterparts are illusory, preferring instead to offer debunking explanations of these judgements.[17] My purpose in this paper is not to take issue with the asymmetry judgments themselves. Rather, I'll simply assume things are as they appear to be. Supposing that there are these puzzling differences, we are faced with two options: either go piecemeal, and explain each puzzle independently, or go wholesale, and offer a unified account that explains them all together. Again, what's notable is that all approaches to these puzzling asymmetries between moral and non-moral beliefs (including the debunking ones) have taken the first option, offering *disunified, piecemeal* explanations.[18] What hasn't been attempted, though, is taking the second option and going wholesale in our explanation. My aim in this paper is to do just that, taking the second, unexplored option, and providing a *unified* account.

In the next section, I will lay out my unified account. Importantly, my account has advantages over the piecemeal accounts currently on offer. Beyond the fact that, all things considered, unified explanations ought to be preferred to disunified ones, my account avoids positing any exceptional features of moral beliefs that some other piecemeal accounts have relied on, like the idea that moral beliefs have a distinct "aim" that non-moral beliefs don't. Rather, my account relies on a familiar epistemic mechanism that is commonplace and widely discussed: epistemic standards and how they shift. According to my account, moral beliefs typically have a higher epistemic standard than non-moral beliefs. This means,

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[17] Driver, "Moral Expertise;" Jason Decker and Daniel Groll, "Moral Testimony: One of These Things is Just Like the Other," *Analytic Philosophy* 54, 4 (2014): 54-74; Jason Decker and Daniel Groll, "The (In)significance of Moral Disagreement for Moral Knowledge," in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics, Volume 8*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 140-167; Karen Jones "Second-hand Moral Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 96, 2 (1999): 55-78; Karen Jones and Francois Schroeter, "Moral Expertise," *Analyse and Kritik* 34, 2 (2012): 217-230; Andrew Reisner and Joseph Van Weelden, "Moral Reasons for Moral Beliefs: A Puzzle for Moral Testimony Pessimism," *Logos and Episteme* 4 (2015): 429-448; Peter Singer, "Moral Experts," *Analysis* 32, 4 (1972): 115-117; Paulina Sliwa, "In Defense of Moral Testimony," *Philosophical Studies* 158, 2 (2012): 175-195.

[18] To be clear: while some have considered two of these puzzles together (e.g., Kieran Setiya, *Knowing Right from Wrong* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), addresses both disagreement and testimony, and Cross, "Moral Philosophy" considers how the presence of disagreement bears on expertise), there exists no account that explains all three in a wholly unified manner.

roughly, that the standard agents must meet in order to receive the relevant positive epistemic credit (e.g., knowledge or justification) is typically more stringent for moral beliefs than the corresponding standard is for non-moral beliefs. To be clear, I won't be arguing for a universal claim: that every single moral belief will have a higher epistemic standard compared to any other non-moral belief. Such a universal claim is too strong to be plausible. Rather, my claim will be that this is *typically* the case, and as such it is a characteristic and noteworthy feature of moral epistemology as such. Importantly, one need not endorse such a universal claim to adequately explain the asymmetries between particular areas of moral and non-moral epistemology, since, as we've seen, these concern *general* issues with particular aspects of moral epistemology. For example, the testimony-involving asymmetry is not that for every single possible instance of non-moral testimony, any possible instance of moral testimony will be more problematic than any possible instance of non-moral testimony. That would be quite implausible; rather, it is that moral testimony *in general* is (more) problematic.[19] In order to assess this account, we should first turn to the concept of an epistemic standard.

2. The Higher Standards Account

2.1. Epistemic Standards

In very basic terms, we can think of an epistemic standard as marking how good of an epistemic position an agent needs to be in to count as *knowing* or as *having a justified belief*. The idea of an epistemic standard captures the intuitive thought that in order to determine whether an agent's belief is justified or counts as knowledge, we need to know not just how much evidence they *have*, but how much they *need*.

This concept of an epistemic standard allows us to capture the thought that in some areas of inquiry, or in some contexts, what's required for knowledge or justification can *change*: it's not that knowledge of every kind of fact requires the

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[19] The same can be said for the other aspects of moral epistemology that have received widespread attention, namely expertise, and the effect disagreement has in undermining knowledge or leading to skepticism. Expertise by definition concerns a general ability, or knowledge of a range of facts about a particular topic, not perfect ability or knowledge of every single fact about a particular topic. Likewise, the phenomenon regarding moral disagreement concerns how it in general leads to skepticism, not how every single instance of moral disagreement undermines the status of knowledge for every single moral belief every single person has. I further explain how my account of there typically being a higher epistemic standard for moral beliefs explains puzzling asymmetries in moral epistemology in section 2.2.

same strength of evidence. This is just to say that sometimes at least, the epistemic standards shift.[20]

This shiftiness of epistemic standards has been utilized by contextualists in epistemology to explain otherwise surprising patterns in our knowledge attributions. For it seems that, while we may want to deny large-scale skepticism wherein agents always know little to nothing at all, we may also want to allow for small-scale skepticism, wherein agents fail to know particular propositions in particularly demanding circumstances. For example, while it seems perfectly innocuous to say that I know that I have hands when I am walking to class, once I find myself embedded in a classroom discussion about skepticism it seems correct to deny that I know I have hands. Contextualists explain these shifty judgments by appealing to epistemic standards: from the walk to the classroom to the discussion of skepticism within the classroom the epistemic standard has shifted (more specifically it has gotten more strict).[21] In this case, while my perception of having hands was good enough to make my belief that I have hands knowledge outside of the classroom, this evidence is no longer sufficient to make my belief knowledge once inside the classroom's skeptical walls with its stricter epistemic standard.

That is the intuitive idea. But we can get a bit more specific. We can say that an epistemic standard specifies a range of possibilities that an agent may ignore or fail to rule out while still counting as knowing or having a justified belief.[22] These possibilities specify ways the world could be in which not-p is true (when one's belief is p). Importantly, this means that for any given belief, there is more than one epistemic possibility: we don't divide up the epistemic possible worlds simply into two worlds, p and not-p, where one of these is the actual world. Rather, epistemic possibilities are individuated by *ways* in which your belief could be false.

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[20] I use an evidentialist model of standards here for the sake of simplicity. Nothing in my argument hangs on this assumption.

[21] Stuart Cohen, "Knowledge and Context," *Journal of Philosophy* 83, 10 (1986): 574-583.

[22] Strictly speaking, this is actually where contextualists and fallibilists—who also appeal to epistemic standards—part ways in their understanding of what a standard specifies. Fallibilists will say that an agent does not need to rule out every possibility, while contextualists will say that they do; the difference is how each is quantifying over 'every.' For the fallibilist, 'every' really does pick out every single possibility, while for the contextualist 'every' picks out a certain subset of every single possibility, for example every *salient* possibility. This is perhaps why some contextualists hold that contextualism is an infallibilist position (see David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74, 4 (1996): 549–567.), while others hold it to be fallibilist in nature (see Mark Heller, "The Proper Role for Contextualism in Anti-Luck Epistemology," *Nous* 33, 13 (1999): 115-129.). In the end, though, each camp seems to agree on this general statement: out of all the total possibilities, in order to know an agent must be able to rule out only all of those possibilities in a subset of these total possibilities.

For example, there are many possible worlds in which your belief that you have hands is false: you could be hallucinating, you could be dreaming, etc. But only some of the ways the world could be—only some of these possible worlds—are relevant to the epistemic status of your beliefs in the actual world. This is because of some relation they bear to you, and that you bear to them: they are salient, or relevant, etc. Provided you are able to rule out that set of worlds where your belief would be false, your beliefs enjoys the relevant positive epistemic status (e.g. knowledge, justification). Overall, the rigor of an epistemic standard can be specified in one of two ways: sometimes, a more rigorous standard specifies *more* possibilities that one must be able to rule out, while other times it specifies possibilities that are simply *harder* to rule out. My account allows for both of these interpretations of rigor.

Like rigor, the notion of "ruling out" possibilities can be understood in a number of ways. On a probabilistic model, this could mean either that some possibilities are made *more improbable*, or that *more possibilities* are made improbable. My claim is just that for moral beliefs, the epistemic standard shifts, becoming more rigorous and thus requiring more in at least one of these two ways. Importantly, this view of standards is also compatible with both internalist and externalist theories of justification and knowledge. For example, if one were a reliabilist, the upwards shift in the rigor of the standard would require one to have more safety or sensitivity. If one were an evidentialist, one would be required to possess stronger evidence that rules out more possibilities. What's important for my claim is that what it takes to have an epistemic state (justification, knowledge) depends on the rigor of the standard, and that morality makes this rigor increase.

Additionally, my account is neutral between competing accounts of how standards are fixed.[23] For example, some hold that this range is flexible, picking out different worlds in different contexts, while others hold that the same range of worlds is picked out in all contexts.[24] Articulating the causes of the shiftiness of epistemic standards in general, and the shiftiness of standards for moral beliefs in particular, is a large project unto itself. Happily, it's mostly outside the scope of the current paper. This is because there are two independent questions: *whether* moral beliefs typically have a higher standard and *what* exactly fixes standards. These questions are obviously related, since one's answer to the latter might determine

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[23] To be clear: my account of what an epistemic standard is neutral along these lines; however, invariantism regarding epistemic standards (that is, standards for any and all kinds of beliefs) is incompatible with my argument for the higher standard for moral beliefs.

[24] The former being contextualists and subject sensitive invariantists, and the latter being invariantists.

one's answer to the former. But answers to the two can come apart in the sense that many can agree that moral beliefs have a higher standard while completely disagreeing about what fixes the standard. For example, many can agree that skeptical scenarios have a higher epistemic standard than non-skeptical ones while disagreeing over what functions to make the standard stricter in skeptical scenarios (e.g. whether contextualism or subject sensitive invariantism is the best account). However, to preserve the credibility of my claim that moral beliefs typically have a higher standard it is important that there at least be someinitially plausible models available, so I will briefly address this issue here.

One possible model of how standards are fixed is the well-known stakes-model, wherein an epistemic standard is determined in part by the practical stakes, or the costs of one's belief turning out to be false.[25] Such a standards-fixing model is taken up elsewhere, where it is said that there are certain practical stakes are unique to moral beliefs (for example, the costs of being the target of certain reactive attitudes) such that when we account for these stakes, such a model does a good job of tracking how most moral beliefs have a higher epistemic standard and how the ones that intuitively don't, don't.[26] Although articulating further details of this model would take us too far afield here, I hope this gives the intuitive, initially plausible flavor of the model. Of course, if this particular model does not sound appealing, one needn't reject my claim that moral beliefs typically have a higher standard: again, these are distinct claims, and so we can agree that moral beliefs typically have a higher standard while disagreeing over the correct account of what fixes those standards. The claim that moral beliefs have a higher epistemic standard does *not* depend on the success of my—or any—particular standards-fixing model. For example, we could instead adopt a kind of Relevant Alternatives Contextualist view, where the possibilities that one must be able to rule out are those that are presupposed or otherwise entered into the conversational score, coupled with a view that moral beliefs presuppose more or more difficult to rule out possibilities.[27] Again, although I lack the space here to adequately address which particular standards-fixing models are the best accounts of the typical higher standard for moral beliefs, such plausible models are available. Given the

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[25] Jeremy Fantl and Matt McGrath, *Knowledge in an Uncertain World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Robin McKenna, "Interests Contextualism," *Philosophia* 39, 4 (2011): 741-750; Jason Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[26] Nicole Dular, "Moral Stakes, Higher Standards," (unpublished manuscript).

[27] Michael Blome-Tillman, "Knowledge and Presuppositions," *Mind* 118, 470 (2009): 241–294.

availability of such models and their initial plausibility, the credibility of the claim I make here that moral beliefs have such a higher standard should remain intact.

2.2. A Unifying Explanation

With this conception of epistemic standards and the idea that the epistemic standard is typically stricter for moral than for non-moral beliefs in hand, we can approach our original problem. I'll now briefly explain how my Higher Standards account resolves the three puzzling featured in moral epistemology with which we began.

First, consider moral testimony and the default judgment that it is an illegitimate way to gain moral knowledge. According to my account, in order to have moral knowledge the requirement that an agent rule out possible worlds is relatively stringent: an agent either needs to rule out a significant number of possible worlds or to rule out a set of worlds that is harder to rule out. The reason why agents are unable to gain moral knowledge from testimony is because merely forming one's belief on the basis of another's report does not provide one with the ability to rule out all of the possibilities that one would need to in order to have (moral) knowledge. Although testimony may equip one with true moral beliefs, it does not equip one with the ability to rule out the demanding set of possible worlds that one needs to in order to have moral knowledge.[28]

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[28] One may wonder how far my Higher Standards account goes in explaining not just asymmetries in judgments about cases of pure moral and non-moral deference (where speakers do not inform hearers of any of the reasons for the truth of their belief) but also in explaining asymmetries in judgments about cases of impure moral and non-moral deference (where hearers come to adopt not only the speaker's belief, but also their reasons in support of the truth of their belief). The worry is that since my account explains the asymmetry in terms of being in a position to rule out possibilities, in cases of impure moral deference the hearer would be able to rule out all of the same possibilities as the speaker, since they possess the same reasons for the belief; but, the asymmetry remains even in these cases, as we still judge that the hearer lacks justification or knowledge while the speaker does not. However, my Higher Standards view is amenable to preserving this asymmetry of impure testimony: it can do so by adopting a more robust interpretation of what "ruling out" requires. For example, on some contextualist views, ruling out would require more than just possessing evidence that makes certain propositions improbable to a certain degree. Rather, it requires that one is able to engage with others in a certain way, for example by appeasing any objections they may have about the truth of your belief. For this more robust understanding of "ruling out", see David Annis, "A Contextualist Theory of Epistemic Justification," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 15, 3 (1978): 213-219, and Carl Wellman, *Challenge and Response: Justification in Ethics* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1971) on the Challenge-Response Model.

Next, consider the apparent lack of moral expertise. According to my account, the standard for moral expertise is stricter than the standard for expertise in other, non-moral domains. This means that the kind of epistemic credentials one would need to have in order to count as an expert are greater for moral expertise. For example, one would need to be able to rule out a comparatively large amount of possibilities for a comparatively large amount of moral beliefs to count as an expert. The reason why moral experts are either scarce or entirely non-existent is because few or perhaps none of us have the ability to do this.

Lastly, my model can explain how disagreement may, after all, lead to skepticism. One way it could do this is by functioning to make relevant new possibilities. For example, it may function to make relevant possibilities like making a mistake in reasoning, or succumbing to a bias. The more widespread a case of disagreement over some moral proposition m, the more possibilities must be ruled out in order to qualify as having knowledge that m. Provided that I cannot rule these out, I fail to secure knowledge. Since standards are understood in terms of possibilities that must be ruled out, moral disagreement leads to skepticism by making more possibilities relevant, and thus by making the epistemic standard more stringent.

Now that we're clear on how my Higher Standards account explains these problematic asymmetries, we should look to see how alternative unified accounts would explain the asymmetries. Again, since in this paper I am seeking an explanation of the apparent oddity of moral epistemology that would vindicate our commonsense judgments about moral testimony, moral expertise, and moral disagreement, I will not be considering debunking explanations of that oddity. As alternative explanations, the accounts to consider are those that posit a mechanism other than the one I appeal to, namely epistemic standards. In the next section, I will consider such rival accounts.

3. Alternative Explanations

3.1. Morality is Hard

One explanation that moral epistemology in general is more problematic than non-moral epistemology is that moral matters are just so exceedingly difficult to figure out. It's just so much more difficult, the thought goes, to determine moral matters such as whether abortion or eating meat is morally permissible than whether the bus runs on Saturdays. It's a very difficult task to do the work that is necessary to adequately settle moral questions: one must consider arguments for and against, checking for falsities, fallacies, counterexamples, and more. Both the kind of

reasoning and time required to consider such questions is large and looming. Morality is hard.

Of course, I agree that morality is hard: this is something that my Higher Standards account explains. In order for this view to be a real competitor, it can't simply amount to the view that moral matters are difficult, since the Higher Standards account may admit this, and then just explain this fact in terms of a more rigorous epistemic standard for morality. Instead, this account must explain what *makes* moral matters epistemically difficult. Moreover, it must do so by appeal to a mechanism other than the one I've identified in order to be a genuine rival.

There are two mechanisms that this rival account might point to. One way of thinking about the "morality is hard" view is that settling moral questions requires a large amount of time; alternatively, one may think that the kind of reasoning required to settle moral questions is exceedingly demanding. Using E to stand for the evidence base that's required to have a justified belief, the view might be either (a) that it is harder to obtain E, i.e. one generally needs to spend more time working in order to obtain E, or (b) that it is harder to draw the correct conclusion on the basis of E, i.e. that the kind of reasoning required to work through one's evidence in order to arrive at a justified belief is of a high level or is quite complex (e.g. it involves the use of difficult mathematical formulas), or both (a) and (b).

Let's take option (a) first. Given this mechanism, one would say that the reason why moral knowledge or justification is harder to obtain is that one needs more time working through or thinking about moral issues in order to successfully arrive at knowledge. More specifically, many agents considering moral questions just haven't obtained E yet (or, more minimally, that they've been able to obtain less of E than the amount of E they're typically able to obtain within the same time for the E that corresponds to various non-moral beliefs).[29] Taking option (b) instead, one would say that the reason why moral knowledge or justification is harder to obtain is that moral issues require one to engage in more demanding or complex forms of reasoning in order to successfully arrive at knowledge. More specifically, many agents considering moral questions just haven't successfully used the kind of higher level reasoning required to adequately draw conclusions on the basis of E. Lastly, if one held both (a) and (b), one would say that the reason why moral knowledge or justification is harder to obtain is that moral issues both require greater time and more complex reasoning in order to successfully arrive at a justified belief or knowledge.

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[29] For example, one could think that one needs normative evidence to justify a normative belief, and it is generally harder to acquire normative evidence (than descriptive evidence).

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In general, this unified account could explain the initial asymmetries in the following way. If moral beliefs are hard with respect to (a) and (b), and moral expertise requires one to have a high amount of evidence and evaluate it extremely well when reaching certain moral beliefs, then moral expertise would be hard to come by. Likewise, given (a) and (b) reliable testifiers would be hard to come by. And, lastly, if it is difficult to assess moral claims in the ways (a) and (b) outline, moral disagreement can lead to skepticism by causing one to lose the evidence one may have had or undermining one's ability to work through the now-competing evidence one has.

Are either of these mechanisms a good explanation of the epistemic difficulty of morality? I think that they are not. Remember here that in order for this rival explanation to explain why moral beliefs have certain epistemic puzzles that non-moral beliefs don't, the mechanisms it points to need to be distinctive of moral beliefs. This is because the explanation we are seeking is one that explains how there are certain systematic *differences* between moral and non-moral epistemology. The reason why this rival account fails is simply because the mechanisms it picks out are not distinctive. To see why, consider the following pair of moral and non-moral beliefs:

> (NM2): Daria is a college freshman taking an applied ethics course and after one month in the course has just been told that many animals were killed last year for their meat, as well as the fact that many animals (e.g. mice, rabbits, and moles) are killed each year in producing and maintaining crops for food that all vegetarians depend on. Daria considers the question of whether being vegetarian kills more animals than being a meat-eater does. After consulting a few reliable yet neutral sources (e.g. peer-reviewed scientific journals, not PETA) on each side of the debate and crunching the numbers, Daria forms the belief that being vegetarian kills more animals than being a meat-eater.

> (M2): Daria is a college freshman taking an applied ethics course and after one month in the course has learnt about arguments both for and against eating meat, considering only arguments for its permissibility and impermissibility (not its obligatoriness), and considering the same quantity (e.g. one each) and quality (e.g. both valid, with plausible premises) of arguments for each side, from a credible yet neutral source (e.g. the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). Daria considers the question of whether eating meat is morally permissible or morally impermissible. Without consulting anyone else, and after carefully considering the arguments, Daria forms the belief that eating meat is morally permissible.

In these cases, it's clear that the non-moral belief is difficult with respect to (a): Daria would need to spend a lot of time working collecting the relevant data about the statistics of animal deaths in crop cultivation and meat farms. It's also the case that each belief is difficult with respect to (b): Daria would need to engage in

some high-level reasoning such as higher-level math to work through all of the information on statistics he had gathered. And, as this account stipulates, the moral belief is likewise difficult with respect to (a) and (b). Yet, it seems that the moral belief still lacks the same kind of epistemic credit that the non-moral belief has (for example, it appears to be less justified).[30] Moreover, upon reflection is it simply not true that morality is the only domain of inquiry that requires a great amount of time or complex reasoning to arrive at knowledge or justified beliefs within that domain: various complex scientific questions also require these. So, even though this account is unified, it does not succeed in accounting for the *asymmetries* of moral and non-moral epistemology.

However, defenders of this alternative account might object. They might insist that the kind of reasoning required for moral beliefs is always going to be more demanding or complex than that required for any other domain of inquiry, as it's of its own special kind, unlike any other type of reasoning used in any other domain. For example, perhaps moral reasoning requires a special kind of sense or faculty that other domains don't, the operation of which is itself extremely complex. But it's terribly *ad hoc* to posit a special kind of reasoning just to save this account. Moreover, this seems to just put a *name* to the problem, rather than offering an *explanation* of it. We started by observing that moral knowledge is hard to come by. It won't do to end simply by observing that the kind of reasoning that leads to moral knowledge is also itself hard to come by. We would still want to know why this is.

We've just seen why this Morality is Hard explanation fails. In the next section, I'll explain why the other competing explanation won't work either.

3.2. Morality's Many Defeaters

Another unified explanation claims that the reason moral beliefs lack the kind of epistemic credit non-moral beliefs enjoy is that moral beliefs typically come with more defeaters than non-moral beliefs do. There are two ways of understanding this defeaters account. On one way of understanding it, the accounts turns out not

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[30] At this point one may object that we would not have the judgment that the moral belief is less justified here if the non-moral belief were to be some controversial scientific claim. First, notice that the non-moral belief presented is controversial: Daria is confronting conflicting accounts of the number of animals killed. Second, in order for the cases to be analogous, if the controversial scientific claim considered is abstract and general, so must the moral claim, which would force us to consider a new moral case as well (e.g., if we are to consider a controversial scientific theory we would need to consider a controversial moral theory); here, both beliefs are comparative and concrete in nature.

to be a genuine rival to my Higher Standards account. On another understanding, although it is a genuine rival, it results in counterintuitive conclusions, and so ought to be rejected. First, let me briefly explain the relevant notion of defeaters in play.

Defeaters come in roughly two kinds: *rebutting* and *undercutting* defeaters.[31] On an evidentialist picture, *rebutting defeaters* are those that serve as a reason to believe a proposition that's incompatible with one's conclusion from the evidence (e.g. d is a defeater that warrants not-p (on the basis of E) when one was originally warranted in concluding p on the basis of E), while *undercutting defeaters* serve as reason to believe that E does not actually itself warrant p, without providing reason to believe the negation of p. Given this characterization, one way to understand defeaters is as a kind of higher-order evidence, that is, evidence about the character of one's (first-order) evidence.[32] For example, consider your belief that the apple is red that you formed on the basis of your perception of the apple appearing red to you. Your belief would be accompanied by the first type of (rebutting) defeater if you were told that you were given an inverted color spectrum drug: in this case, the fact that you were given such a drug means that you now have, on the basis of your perception, a reason to believe that the apple is green, not red. It is evidence that your original first-order evidence—your perception—actually does not warrant p (that the apple is red), but rather warrants a proposition incompatible with p (that the apple is green). In this case we can say that your total evidence consisting of E+d warrants not-p. Your belief would be accompanied by the second type of (undercutting) defeater if you were told that there's a 50/50 chance that you were given an inverted color spectrum drug: in this case, your original evidence for your belief that the apple is red (your visual perception) would be insufficient evidence for your original belief, such that you ought to abstain from believing what color the apple is. In this case we can say that your total evidence consisting of E+d fails to warrant p.

Now, for the opponent who wants to claim that the grounds of the asymmetries in moral epistemology is that moral beliefs typically have more defeaters than non-moral beliefs, they must not only point to defeaters that accompany moral beliefs, but also point to ones that are *specific* to moral beliefs such that non-moral beliefs either don't also typically have them or don't typically

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[31] John Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986).

[32] David Christensen, "Higher-Order Evidence," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81, 1 (2010): 185-215; Maria Lasonen-Aarnio, "Higher-Order Evidence and the Limits of Defeat," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 88, 2 (2014): 314-345.

have them to the same degree. Otherwise such defeaters would not account for the *difference* in epistemic credit between moral and non-moral beliefs. Given this constraint, there are a few considerations one might cite. One might point to the fact that there is a lot of disagreement surrounding moral claims, much more than what typically surrounds non-moral claims. Likewise, one might argue that there are more counter-arguments to consider with respect to moral claims than non-moral claims. With each of these options, one could claim that one's (first-order) evidence E doesn't yield a justified moral belief or knowledge because any of these considerations would serve as a kind of defeater for E, either in the sense that it makes E insufficient to warrant the belief that p, or that it makes E warrant the belief that not-p: either way, one's total evidence consisting of E+d fails to make one epistemically justified in believing p or knowledge that p. For example, consider a case where I originally believe that eating meat is morally permissible, but then come across another rational person (perhaps even with all the same non-moral evidence that I have) who disagrees with me and who instead believes that eating meat is morally impermissible. One could claim that that's a reason to think that my original evidence E is not sufficient to justify me in believing that eating meat is morally permissible, such that I should abstain from believing it. In this case, the fact of this disagreement undercuts my (first-order) evidence E to believe that eating meat is morally permissible; thus, my total evidence consisting of E+d would fail to make my belief that eating meat is morally permissible epistemically justified. In this way, even if an agent had roughly the same amount of first-order evidence for both her moral and non-moral beliefs, her moral belief would be less justified because there would be more defeaters present, and so more reasons that make it the case that E is not sufficient to warrant her moral belief. The total evidence the agents typically have for moral and non-moral beliefs is not the same.

At this point we need to consider precisely how defeaters function to make one's evidence insufficient to warrant one's belief that p. On one understanding, defeaters (or, more specifically, the fact of disagreement in the moral case) function by raising a specific possibility that my belief is false. For example, maybe eating meat is morally impermissible after all, given that (so many) reasonable others think so; perhaps I made a mistake in my reasoning, or succumbed to bias. On this understanding, while defeaters undermine my (first-order) evidence E for my belief that p such that my total evidence of E+d is no longer sufficient to justify p, they do this by introducing additional ways in which my belief could be false, that is, possibilities. On this account, defeaters just introduce or make relevant certain kinds of possibilities, ones that are not ruled out by one's evidence (given that, if it could be ruled out, it wouldn't render E insufficient to justify p).

For example, consider our previous example involving the belief that the apple is red, where one's evidence consists of the perception of the apple appearing red, and the defeater that's present is the fact that there's a 50/50 chance one was given an inverted color-spectrum drug. On the proposed understanding of what defeaters are, the fact that there's a 50/50 chance that one was given an inverted color-spectrum drug introduces a new possibility that the apple is not red (more specifically, that it's green). However, since one's evidence—namely, one's perception—is not able to rule out this possibility, one's belief fails to be justified or count as knowledge.

At this point, talk of possibilities should sound familiar to the attentive reader. This is because epistemic standards were originally understood as specifying possibilities that must be ruled out in order for a subject's belief to count as justified or knowledge. Remember again that this is just to say that the more rigorous the standard, the greater the set of possibilities. So, if defeaters are just relevant possibilities—specifically, ones that one's evidence is unable to render sufficiently improbable—then one who holds that there are generally more defeaters for moral beliefs than non-moral beliefs is committed to the view that moral beliefs generally have higher epistemic standards.

To further understand how this 'More Defeaters' view is not a rival view to my favored 'Higher Standards' view, consider the following model.
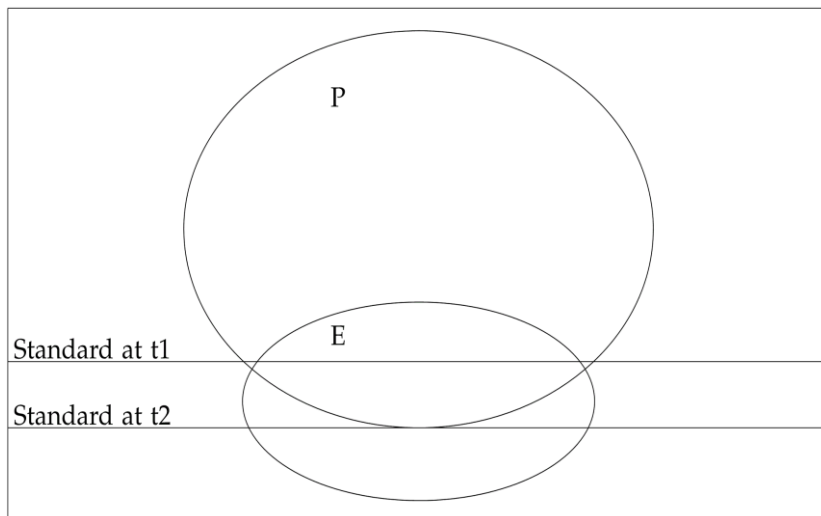
On this model, let the box indicate the set of all epistemic possibilities. Let the 'P' circle indicate the possible worlds in which p is true, and the 'E' circle indicate the

worlds that are compatible with one's evidence; all of the space outside of these circles consists of not-p worlds. Using our case, we can understand the 't1' line as indicating the epistemic standard at the time before the defeater was introduced (before you were told that there's a 50/50 chance you were given an inverted color spectrum drug), while the 't2' line indicates the epistemic standard at the time after the defeater was introduced. The epistemic standard at t1 indicates all of the possible worlds one needs to rule out at t1 in order to count as having a justified belief that p (namely all of those worlds above the 'standard at t1' line), while the epistemic standard at t2 indicates all of the possible worlds one needs to rule out at t2 in order to count as having a justified belief that p (all of the worlds above the 'standard at t2' line). The standard at t1 is pretty low: it indicates, roughly, that one can fail to rule out all of the not-p worlds that fall below it while still having a justified belief that p. However, at t2 the standard increases, becoming more stringent, thus indicating, roughly, that one can fail to rule out only those not-p worlds that fall below it while still having a justified belief that p. Importantly, though, while at t1 (pre-defeater) there are no not-p worlds that are compatible with your evidence (that is, there are no worlds that are inside the E circle but outside the P circle), at t2 (post defeater) there are; this means that while your belief meets the epistemic standard at t1, it fails to meet it at t2, such that while you have a justified belief or know that p at t1, you have an unjustified belief or fail to know that p at t2.

It should be clear, then, that this particular interpretation of the More Defeaters view is not a rival account to my Higher Standards account. Rather than denying that moral beliefs enjoy higher epistemic standards than non-moral beliefs, this More Defeaters view is just articulating a specific way in which the standard is higher, or how it is that the standard is higher for moral beliefs (or, more specifically, what makes a possibility one an agent must be able to rule out). But, again, they are not disagreeing about the fact that the epistemic standard is higher for moral beliefs.

However, there remains an interpretation of the More Defeaters view that is a genuine competing alternative to my Higher Standards view. On this alternative understanding, defeaters (or, more specifically, the fact of disagreement in the moral case) function to make one's evidence insufficient to warrant one's belief that p by directly affecting one's evidence. It is not that the standard becomes more rigorous, but just that one falls farther from it given the reduced strength of one's evidence. On this account, the epistemic standards for moral and non-moral beliefs could be exactly the same and remain fixed, but yet moral beliefs are more

epistemically problematic because one's evidence is typically comparatively worse in the moral domain.

Importantly, for this view to capture cases of comparative lack of justification and not just knowledge for moral beliefs, it would have to be the case that the relevant defeaters are recognized or possessed by the agent. This is because although some hold that the simple existence of defeaters—in this case, the simple existence of moral disagreement—is enough to undermine knowledge, it is widely held that in order to affect justification, the agent herself must be confronted with the defeater or made aware of it.[33]

The problem with this account is that while it seems correct to say that justification is undermined by defeaters only when agents are cognizant of them for non-moral cases, in the moral case lack of awareness of the defeater leads to counterintuitive results. For example, this understanding of the More Defeaters view would implausibly conclude that in cases where agents just aren't aware of such disagreement concerning a moral issue (for example, because they live in very isolated homogeneous communities, or never bothered to ask anyone else their opinion on the matter), their moral beliefs would not suffer a loss of justification. Likewise, if all that is required to be a moral expert is to have a sufficiently high volume of justified moral beliefs, then one could become a moral expert quite easily. But this is very counterintuitive. So, while this understanding of defeaters can explain some cases, it cannot explain all the puzzles that would need to be explained.

In the end, then, the More Defeaters view either is not a genuine rival to my Higher Standards view, or is rife with counterexamples, and so ought to be rejected.

4. Different but Equal?

Even if the first understanding of the More Defeaters view is not incompatible with my favored Higher Standards view, we might still wonder why one should favor my account. After all, if both accounts explain initial puzzles about moral beliefs, and do so by appealing to epistemic possibilities, then why should we say that what explains this difference is that moral beliefs have a higher epistemic standard, rather than that they are accompanied by more defeaters?

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[33] Defeaters that undermine justification are commonly referred to as "mental state defeaters," as opposed to "propositional defeaters" which are not believed by the agent and only undermine knowledge. On mental state and propositional defeaters see Michael Bergmann, *Justification without Awareness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) on mental state and propositional defeaters.

For example, some may think that my Higher Standards view sacrifices important intuitions regarding the relation between evidence and defeaters by always viewing defeaters as relevant possibilities. On my view, the relationship between evidence and defeaters involves the introduction of new possibilities. This makes it seem as though while one's epistemic position worsens, one's evidence doesn't worsen at all—that is, one's epistemic position worsens despite one's evidence not worsening at all. But this seems to sacrifice a very intuitive thought that one's evidence gets worse with the presence of defeaters. Instead of raising epistemic standards, defeaters are typically conceptualized under the second interpretation of the More Defeaters view, wherein they render one's belief insufficiently justified by just simply reducing the strength of what serves as one's justification, for example one's evidence. Intuitively, we think that when one is told that there's a 50/50 chance that one was given an inverted color spectrum drug, it's not just that one's belief now fails to be justified, but that one's evidence has gotten *worse*, and fails to be justified *because* one's evidence has gotten worse. On a probabilistic model of evidence, the thought is as follows: while initially one's evidence may have made p probable to degree .9, when a defeater is introduced one's evidence now makes p probable to degree .5. However, as noted, this understanding of how one's evidence has gotten worse when a defeater is present is compatible with epistemic standards remaining at the same level. So, it might seem as though my Higher Standards account cannot account for the commonsensical thought that when defeaters get introduced one's evidence becomes worse.

While I agree that it would be problematic for my view if it was unable to account for this commonsensical thought, I don't believe that it faces this problem. To see this, we should return to our model. On a standard probability model, a defeater just functions to make E smaller (in other words, by making the not-p space bigger), where a certain probability is specified for an epistemic standard, and the probability that p is determined as follows (assuming for simplicity only finitely many possible worlds):

Pr (p) = number of p-worlds in E / total number of worlds in E

There is, however, an alternative way to think of how defeaters affect probability. On my model, it's true that when a defeater is introduced, the degree to which one's evidence makes p probable decreases. Rather than utilizing the above standard model of probability, though, my fallibilist view amends it as follows:

Pr (p) = number of p-worlds in E above t_n / total number of worlds in E above t_n

While on this model of probability it's true that one's evidence is *worse* in the sense of yielding a lower probability of p at t2 (post-defeater) than at t1 (pre-defeater), it has gotten worse precisely because the standard has gone up. So, this alternative model can show how the probability of p given one's evidence has gotten worse when a defeater is present in a way that doesn't make the raising of epistemic standards irrelevant. Since my proposed way of understanding defeaters in terms of possibilities can accommodate the sense in which one's evidence has gotten *worse* when a defeater is introduced, it ought not be abandoned

Another reason to favor my Higher Standards account is if it explains some cases that this interpretation of the More Defeaters account doesn't. Some of this may turn on the precise theoretical explanation for the higher epistemic standard; for example, if we endorse a kind of impurist view wherein the practical stakes of holding a belief affects the degree of justification the belief has, then the More Defeaters view would be an insufficient explanation of the degree of justification. To see why this would be the case, take the classic bank cases as an example.[34] Here, the proposition that the bank could've changed its hours isn't properly characterized as a defeater, since it's not properly characterized as higher-order evidence (that is, it's not evidence that your first order evidence (that you were at the bank last Saturday) does not warrant your belief (that the bank is open on Saturdays)). Rather, something like the proposition that you were only dreaming that you were at the bank last Saturday would be higher-order evidence. If we should conceive of the way justification is determined for moral beliefs as analogous to the bank cases (namely where the possibilities an agent must be able to rule out in order to have a justified moral belief is partly determined by what's practically at stake in holding the belief), then this More Defeaters view will be ruled out as the best explanation.

Moreover, it can also be said that in so far as defeaters introduce just *one* type of possibilities, or hold that possibilities can be introduced in just *one* way, my Higher Standards view will be able to explain more cases, and more diverse cases, as possibilities are introduced in multiple ways (the presence of disagreement isn't the only way to introduce a possibility). These are all reasons to favor my Higher Standards account over the first interpretation of the More Defeaters account, even if the More Defeaters view is not a genuine rival to my favored Higher Standards view.

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[34] Keith DeRose, "Solving the Skeptical Problem," *The Philosophical Review* 104, 1 (1992): 1–52.

6. Conclusion

Moral testimony, moral expertise, and moral disagreement have all been thought to be distinctively problematic—that is, problematic in ways non-moral testimony, non-moral expertise, and non-moral disagreement are not. Previous explanations of their problematic nature have been piecemeal in nature, seeking to explain why each issue is problematic in isolation. In this paper, I've offered a unified explanation of the problematic nature of these issues, the Higher Standards account, thus departing from previous explanatory accounts of these phenomena. According to this unified account, the relative epistemically problematic nature of moral testimony, moral expertise, and moral disagreement is explained by the fact that moral beliefs typically enjoy a higher epistemic standard than non-moral beliefs. After first explaining my Higher Standards account, I considered two rival unified accounts that would explain the problematic nature of moral testimony, moral expertise, and moral disagreement, namely the Morality is Hard view and the More Defeaters view. I argued that these accounts were either rife with counterexamples, were ad hoc, or reduced to a variant of my view, concluding that my Higher Standards account is the best unified explanation on offer.[35]